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## SOME OLD DATES In Muhlenberg's Past

BY OTTO A. ROTHERT, in three chapters

### CHAPTER I.

During the past four years I have contributed to the Greenville Record a number of chapters in which I attempted to write on some of the traditions I collected in southern Muhlenberg. I have always tried to take advantage of every opportunity to gather local history from among the older people who have the reputation of being well versed in "old times," for I realize that the day is not far off when these men and women shall have passed away and with them much of our country's early history. The generations who are succeeding them are, as a rule, not yet sufficiently interested in the unrecorded past to make any noticeable attempts to help perpetuate it, verbally or otherwise.

I have heretofore never turned to the Court House records in search of any information, for the simple reason that I feel confident those records will always be at the disposal of any future historian. But the information stored in the memory of our oldest citizens will soon be beyond our reach. So, while the venerables of the "old school" are still with us, let us gather what we can while we may.

To assure myself that some of the dates so frequently used in tradition as a basis of establishing other events are practically correct, I recently spent an afternoon comparing a few of the dates handed down by tradition with those preserved in the clerk's books. I selected six dates for documentary and traditional comparison. Tradition says:

1. The first court in Muhlenberg was held in 1799 in the residence of John Dennis, about two miles southeast of Greenville on the Russellville road near where the Elkton road turns off. Wm. I. Gragston's residence now stands on the site of the old Dennis building, which was torn down in 1902.

2. Greenville was started in 1798.

3. The first court house was built in 1799.

4. The second court house was built in 1834.

5. The stone jail was completed in 1865.

6. The one story brick building erected south of the old court house, and used as a county clerk's office, was built in 1866.

All of these dates agree except the one pertaining to the beginning of Greenville. I infer that Greenville was begun in 1799 instead of, as tradition says, 1798. Muhlenberg county, as is well known, was established in 1798. The records quoted indicate that up to June 25, 1799, when the present site of Greenville was selected for a Seat of Justice, the town, nor any trace of it, had yet sprung into existence. Tradition says Samuel Russell's house was the first one in Greenville. It stood in Main St. opposite the court house until 1867 when it was torn down. Its location indicates that it was not built until the site for the court house had been selected. There is also tradition to that effect. It is therefore probable that the work on the first house was begun in the summer of 1799 and that it was ready for occupancy on or before Dec. 24, 1799, on which date, the first court was held in Greenville "at the house of Samuel Russell."

Caney Station lay a mile and a half northwest. It had been established, some say, in 1793, others in 1795. When the place for the court house had been selected (June 1799) practically all the people of Caney Station made preparation to locate in the new town site. A few years later Caney Station was entirely abandoned. In the course of time the buildings began to tumble down, and finally all traces of Caney's house disappeared. The only thing now left to mark this historic spot is an old graveyard bestrewn with a dozen or more fallen tombstones, some shaded by a few cedars and walnuts; others hidden by briars or myrtle.

Col. Wm. Campbell was one of the establishers of Caney Station. He died in Lexington in 1800 where he had gone for medical treatment. Among those associated with him in building this station were John C. and Samuel Russell, who were two of the brothers of Tabitha A. Russell Campbell, the wife of Col. Wm. Campbell. These three Russells were children of Gen. Wm. Russell, but the only ones of his large family to settle in Muhlenberg. Among Gen. Wm. Russell's other children was Col. Wm. Russell, after whom Russellville is named.

After Capt. Wm. Campbell's death his widow and five children continued to live here. Their only son died at the age of 21. Elizabeth married Elder Barton W. Stone, the evangelist; the other three daughters became the wives of some of Muhlenberg's prominent men. Tabitha married Judge Alney McLean, Anna married Charles Fox Wing, and Mary married Ephraim M. Brank. Among the children of Charles Fox Wing were Jane Wing, who married Edward Rumsey, and Lucy Wing, who, after the death of her first husband Johnathan Short, married Dr. W. H. Yost. This venerable old lady still lives in Greenville.

The children of John C. and Samuel Russell were also identified with the upbuilding of Greenville and Muhlenberg county, but they were not represented here as long nor as numerous as the descendants of Col. Wm. Campbell. Ed. M. Russell, formerly of Greenville but now of Paris, Tenn., is a son of Robert S. Russell and a grandson of Samuel Russell. The name of John C. Russell, who in 1808 moved into what is now the Pleasant Hill neighborhood, is still perpetuated in the traditions of the Russell Old Field, which, in the forties became the Russell Race Track and Muster Grounds, and which today is divided into a number of up-to-date farms, each being referred to as a part of "the Old Russell Survey."

I realize I have digressed. However, in doing so, I have shown the kinship that existed between some of the people whose names are so extensively interwoven with our early history.

I am not yet sufficiently prepared to give similar dates on the genealogy of the other men whose names appear so prominently in the court records now under discussion.

I shall now quote in full the court record of the proceedings of the first county court held in Muhlenberg.

"May 28th, 1799. At the house of John Dennis, in the county of Muhlenberg, on Tuesday the 28th day of May 1799.

Agreeable to an Act of Assembly entitled an Act for Forming a New County out of the Counties of Logan and Christian, a commission of the peace from his Excellency, James Garrard, Esquire, was produced, directed to James Craig, John Dennis, William Bell, Isaac Davis, John Russell, Robert Cissna, Richard Morton, John Adams and Jess McPherson, appointing them justices of the peace in and for the county aforesaid, which being read, thereupon John Dennis, Esquire administered the oath to support the Constitution of the United States, the oath of fidelity to this Commonwealth and also the oath of justice of the peace to James Craig, Isaac Davis and William Bell, whereupon the said Jas. Craig administered the several oaths to John Dennis, Esquire.

And thereupon a court was held for said county. Present: James Craig, John Dennis, Isaac Davis, William Bell.

John Bradley, Esquire produced a commission from his Excellency the Governor appointing him Sheriff in and for said county which being read, he, the said John, thereupon took the oath to support the constitution of the United States, the oath

of fidelity to this Commonwealth and also the oath of office of Sheriff, and together with Isaac Davis and William Worthington, his securities, entered into and acknowledged their bond in the penalty of Three Thousand Dollars conditioned as the law directs.

The court appointed Charles Fox Wing their clerk pro tempore who thereupon took the oath to support the Constitution of the United States, the oath of fidelity to this Commonwealth and also the oath of office, and together with Henry Rhoads, Sen. and William Campbell, has securities, entered into bond in the penalty and conditioned as the law directs.

Alney McLean, Esquire produces a commission from his Excellency the Governor appointing him Surveyor in and for the county of Muhlenberg, whereupon he took the oath to support the Constitution of the United States, the oath of fidelity to this Commonwealth and also the oath of office, and together with Robert Ewing and Ephraim McLean, Sec., his securities, entered into and acknowledged their bond in the penalty of six hundred pounds conditioned as the law directs.

On the recommendation of Alney McLean, Esquire, surveyor of the county, William Bradford, George Teirnell and James Weir, Esquire, were admitted as his deputies, who thereupon took the oath to support the Constitution of the United States and the oath of fidelity to this Commonwealth and also the oath of office as deputy surveyors.

Peter Lyons' stockmark: two smooth crops and a nick under each ear. On his motion ordered to be recorded.

Henry Davis' stockmark; a hole in each ear. On his motion ordered to be recorded.

The court appointed John Anderson constable for the county of Muhlenberg, who thereupon took the oath to support the Constitution of the United States, the oath of fidelity to this Commonwealth and also the oath of constable, and together with Richard Tyley, his security, entered into and acknowledged their bond in the penalty and conditions as the law directs.

On the motion of Richard Tyler leave is granted him to keep a tavern at his house in Lewisburg whereupon with Lewis Kinchalo, his security executed bond in the penalty and conditions as the law directs.

Ordered that the next court be held at John Dennis.

Ordered that the court be adjourned until court in course.

The minutes of these proceedings were signed by James Craig "

(TO BE CONTINUED)



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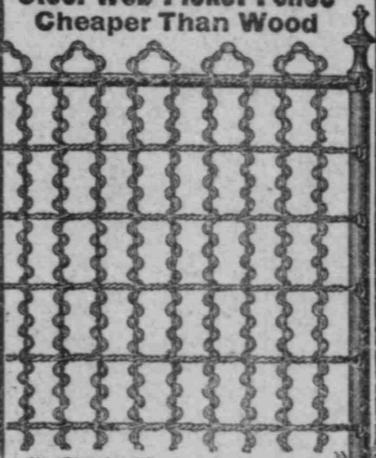
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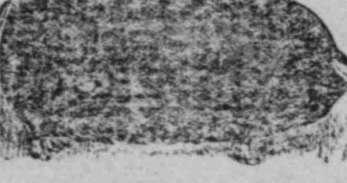


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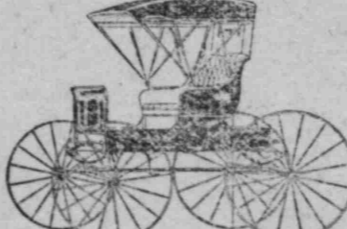
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